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MOBILIZATION FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

A PLAN FOR

CIVIL-MILITARY SERVICE

TO INSURE AN ADEQUATE FOOD SUPPLY FOR THE UNITED STATES AND WESTERN EUROPE

Proposed by the University of Illinois

Prepared by the Faculty of the College of Agriculture and the Department of Economics

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This Plan is based upon the following facts:

1. The present production of food in the United States is not increasing in proportion to the increase in population.

2. In going to war, the production of food is our strongest asset, particularly in view of the reduced food production in Canada and in western Europe.

3. The experience of all time indicates that every nation in going to war puts men into active military service without regard to the disturbance of basic industrial conditions, even the production of the food of the people.

4. Indiscriminate enlistment from the farms with no plan for labor replacement is certain to reduce food production below the level of positive need, for we already have two lean years behind us and under present conditions of a hungry world continued shortage may mean disaster.

5. If an adequate food supply is to be assured, *the military plan must include an enlistment for food production as definite as for service at the front.* From the first the Department of War should as rigorously protect the food production as it does any other means of national defense.

6. Anything like limiting the food of the people is wholly unnecessary if reasonable attention be given to the business of production. America has land enough, if it is properly handled, to feed both

herself and western Europe; besides, more men would be required to enforce a police restriction of food than would be required to turn a scarcity into an abundance.

7. For years labor has been deserting the land and building up conditions of employment that the farmer cannot meet, for it is impossible to conduct a farm upon the eight-hour plan and according to union rules. The typical family of five cannot work to the best advantage the typical farm of one hundred and twenty to two hundred and forty acres, and the farmer has reached the limit in the use of machinery and in the employment of his children to replace the hired help that has gone to the city. Any plan to be safe, therefore, must not only make good the enlistment from the country, but *must actually add to the present labor supply of the farmer.*

DETAIL PROCEDURE

I. Registration.—Register every farm operator, whether owner, tenant, or manager, together with the number of acres of tillable land, pasture, and timber; the men he usually employs, including his sons, and the number of men he would need to employ in order to insure maximum crops.

II. Enlistment.—Enlist in the Civil-Military Service and under military pay the following classes:

1. Men above military age, especially with farm experience.
2. Men of military age and of good health but either permanently or temporarily unfit for war service at the front.
3. Boys from fifteen to eighteen years of age, whether from the country or from the city.

III. Training Camp Farms

1. Establish at convenient points on land rented by the government and suitable for intensive farming, military camps where the enlisted men not otherwise employed (see under Employment) may be gathered and housed, such farms to be devoted to the raising of crops requiring a maximum amount of hand labor, such as vegetables, small fruits, cotton, and tobacco.

2. Erect at these centers facilities for drying and canning such food products for preservation and for transportation.

IV. Employment

1. On farms: The largest asset for food production is the thousands of farms already organized under the management of experienced farmers, each with an independent business operating thru established channels of trade. Here should go the maximum of the enlisted men, and the camps should be ready at all times to furnish lists of available help, it being understood that men under employment by the farmer are on furlough and off government pay, receiving from the farmer the "going wage" of the locality, dependent upon the work the man or the boy is able to do. All such enlisted men should be reported from time to time as may be required by the military authorities.

It should be understood as a part of the plan that an enlisted man having taken service with a farmer and becoming dissatisfied may return to the camp and the lower wage, or if he is unable to give satisfaction he may be discharged, in which case he must return at once to camp.

2. Enlisted men not employed on private farms should be at the camp farms under military discipline, but under agricultural leadership; such men to devote their first attention to the production of food under the direction of an agricultural leader, chosen in each case for his ability in the particular kind of farming followed at this special camp.

The plan of farming should be such as to afford time for regular military drill for those of military age and below, not only for the welfare of the camp, but in order to afford preparation for such as are going to the front as soon as their age limitations or physical disabilities are removed. In general, men of military age and above without farm experience should be quartered in regions engaged in intensive farming where oversight is possible.

As the camp is depleted by members entering the active military service, its numbers should be systematically replenished by new enlistments.

Registration or enlistment for Civil-Military Service should be considered as truly patriotic as any service, and such enlistment should be made attractive thru formal recognition, as by uniforms and the use of special organizations, ranks, and degrees of efficiency, even promotion and commissions. Especially is this true for the younger men and boys.

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ENDORSEMENT OF ILLINOIS PLAN

Extracts from plan proposed by a Conference of State Agricultural officials and representatives of the Agricultural Colleges, of the states east of the Rocky Mountains, sitting in St. Louis, April 9 and 10, on call of the Honorable David F. Houston, Secretary of Agriculture and by him recommended to the Council of National Defense.

"Mobilizing Farm Labor

"The plan for public defense should include as definite a provision for enlistment for food supply as for service at the front.

"In addition to more than one-half of those applying for enlistment and rejected because of unfitness for military service, there are more than two millions of boys between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years in the cities and towns not now engaged in productive work vital to the nation in the present war emergency.....

"In consideration of all these facts, the plan of military enlistment should be broadened so as to include in a national service those who, by reason of their age or physical condition, are permanently or temporarily incapacitated for active military duty but who are able to render to the Government equally indispensable service in the production of food, supplies, and munitions.

"This enlistment should include three classes: men beyond military age; men of military age but not accepted for active military duty; and boys under age for enlistment.

"The Government should make plans at once for the mobilization of this important resource for the production of food and other necessities. This proposed enlistment in the national service should be regarded as part of the public patriotic service in the present war emergency and be given proper official recognition.

"The Harvest Emergency

"....We suggest that the Federal Department of Agriculture, cooperating with the State Departments of Agriculture and other agencies, should take steps to mobilize sufficient farm labor to meet all emergencies which may arise

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Agreeable to the conclusions of this Conference, bills have been introduced in Congress; and the State University urges the farmers of Illinois to turn every energy to increasing the food supply, not by unusual crops or methods, but by those known to be successful in the locality. Corn, navy beans, potatoes, and wheat are the food crops most needed; and the world's shortage seems to mean that prices will be satisfactory. An immediate increase of poultry and the raising of fall litters of pigs are needed to prevent shortage in meat. The family supply of small fruits and vegetables should be produced at home, saving the commercial goods for shipment. But while everything possible is being done to increase production, it is of extreme importance also that waste in every form be avoided.

URBANA
APRIL 20, 1917

E. Davenport

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Meat will be scarce! Save the brood sow and set the old hen